



Ron & Cheryl Myers

GOD'S WORD FOR ISAN NEWSLETTER

August 2021

*A Faith-based Ministry Sustained Through the Prayers and Partnership of God's People*

## "Follow Me and You Will Arrest People"

-or-

## "Follow Me and You Will Seek People"

By Ron Myers

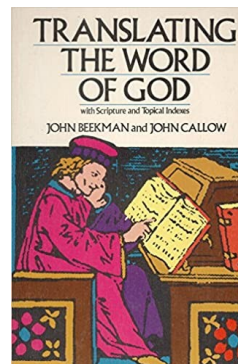
Greetings Again in The Matchless Name of The Lord Jesus Christ,

TRANSLATING GOD'S WORD: Bible translation is both a science, a skill, and a philosophy. A study was once done by a leading professional translating service who listed the degrees of difficulty from one-to-ten in translating various types of documents. Bible translation was not included in their list, saying it was above their scale of ability to accomplish. To be a good translator, the missionary must know and speak both the language and underlying culture of the people—in-depth vocabulary-wise and experientially skill-wise—to the point where he or she can recognize problems in perception and understanding that might occur if passage is expressed incorrectly. There are prescribed guidelines one must follow to ensure accuracy and faithfulness to the original text and ways to check to ensure correct understanding. That being, to check the phraseology with uninitiated native speakers—those who did not assist in the translation process.

Different languages handle concepts in different ways, yet Bible translation needs to be approached using the same underlying principles or guidelines. The more distant a language is in relationship to New Testament *Koine* Greek—an unwritten spoken dialect that flourished during the era—the more a Bible translator needs to apply these guidelines to assure accuracy. Two veteran Wycliffe missionaries authored a timeless classic in 1974, of which I have a personally autographed copy: *Translating the Word of God*, by John Beekman and John Callow (ISBN: 1117860701).

When I translated the New Testament into the Isan language of Northeast Thailand, I applied these guidelines, following a near-literal translation philosophy and technique, now called *formal equivalence*. I say *near literal* because absolute word-for-word literal transference across languages can only be achieved in closely-related sister languages like Thai, Isan, and Laotian. I encountered this when transferring the Isan New Testament from Thai script into Lao script for use in neighboring Communist Laos and among Laotian refugees who have resettled in various countries around the world. There were slight differences in terminology that occurred, which needed to be addressed.

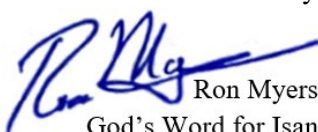
I said *as literal as possible* since some passages take extra pains because of something called *co-locational clash*. Simply put, this means the receptor language already has a predetermined meaning residing in the same term or phrase of the passage being translated. A prime example (that I use in this newsletter's title) is found Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17. "Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you [become] fishers of men.'" A literal translation of this passage into Thai, Isan or Laotian would read: "Follow Me, and I will have you catch people." However, to the native speaker it says: "Follow Me, and I will have you arrest people." The Thai, Isan, and Laotian word for catch is *jop*—sounds like *job* but ending with a *p*—meaning to catch or grab something (as in *to catch* fish). Or, it can mean to arrest someone (as the police do). This verse needed some extra thought and research to keep it as near-literal as possible while conveying the correct meaning. I had to stray a little from a strictly literal rendering by using the word *to seek* instead, which conveyed the meaning. Note: A passage wrongly translated can carry *zero* meaning, or worse yet it can carry a *bogus* meaning.



If, after reading this, you realize Bible translation carries a great deal of life-or-death spiritual responsibility, you'd be right. And yet, the rewards are incalculable. After over two decades of grueling hours, days, months, and years of toil, I held and read from one of the first copies off the press—a surreal experience. Another incomparable surreal experience is to witness Isan people (like this elderly couple) read from the Isan New Testament—their own Isan heart language—for the first time and hear them *Oohing* and *Aahing* in rapt awe as God's living Word enters their spiritually parched hearts.



God is Great—Serve Him Today!

  
Ron Myers

God's Word for Isan  
Website: [www.IsanBible.org](http://www.IsanBible.org)

A SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS: Cheryl and I are grateful for each of you who partner with us both in prayer and financial assistance—whether a church group, a family, or individuals. Why is this so necessary? There are untold millions still living in hopeless spiritual darkness at the far ends of the earth, waiting to hear the first word about their Creator God and salvation from sin through His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul said some send and some go. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14-15)

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